

Let's help our children keep the schools we have

Vote yes. Oberlin's kids deserve good schools. They need great teachers. Don't turn them down. Don't be fooled by those who say the schools don't need money. They do. They need, in fact, more than will come from the small tax increase up for a vote in this election. Don't believe that a yes vote will solve all the schools' problems, either. This is just a stopgap. The district is going to be facing some serious cutbacks. It lost more than 10 percent of its enrollment in just one year and may lose another 5 percent this year. Under the state budget formula, that's going to have to translate into fewer teachers and fewer classes at both schools.

What it's going to come down to is this: If we want to continue having good schools in Oberlin, we're going to have to pay more to educate fewer children. The alternative will be to cut out programs that make a difference and give students less. To some extent, that will happen no matter what we do. But we can support our school at the polls Tuesday, and we should. There is not much besides a tax increase that will prop up the school budget. Enrollment continues to decline and the state is broke. There is no free money hiding anywhere. It's true that people here are hurting as bad as the schools. We all are. But there need to be some priorities in public life. And schools have long been Oberlin's priority. Keep it that way. Vote yes. — *Steve Haynes.*

It's grandkid time again

This is dedicated to all grandparents out there, especially those that have grandkids visiting for a week or two this summer.

Kara and I rendezvoused in Wichita over the weekend to do the "Taylor trade-off." The road home was uneventful, except I received my first dandelion bouquet from a roadside rest area along the way. That was pretty special. And now, I have a paper cup vase full of dandelion and bindweed blossoms.

We stopped to see my brother Bob, and Taylor impressed him with her electronic toys. Which, of course, neither he nor I could operate.

Bob is taking another Spanish course and since Taylor has a bilingual daycare provider, she had to count for him in "Español" and recite all the Spanish phrases she knows.

Right now, she is just like a language sponge. She can absorb a language and not even know she's learning it. She will grow up just knowing it. Since Grandma knows a few Spanish nouns, we'll try to increase her vocabulary while she's here.

Taylor loves to swing. Ever since she can remember, we've had a swing hanging from a branch in the tree in front of our house. There's a little slope to the yard there as it goes down to meet the street. It's just perfect for a kid to kind of back up the hill, hop onto the swing and get a little lift as they swing out. She also likes to hang over the seat and spin.



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
cplotts@nwkansas.com

She'll "wind up" the rope, then lift her feet off the ground and twirl, twirl, twirl as it unwinds.

Personally, I think it's as much the freedom to do it as anything that she likes. She'll head out the front door, calling back over her shoulder, "I'm going to go swing. OK, Grandma?" "Yeah, sure. That's OK," I say to the slamming of the door. I know she didn't hear me. But that's OK, too. She knew I would say, "Yes."

After church Sunday, Taylor went home for the afternoon with her Aunt Jennifer and cousin Alex. We went up later to retrieve her and when I inquired as to how they got along, Jennifer said, "You would think they had been raised together. They fought like sisters." Not fighting per se, just that annoying, constant, "Al-lex" or "Mo-om, Taylor won't gimme it." But, of course, you can't separate them. That would be a punishment.

Alex is about to experience a first in her life: sleep-over camp. She leaves Tuesday for church camp, and is excited and nervous at the same time. Her best friend from church went to an earlier camp and

Alex was apprehensive that she wouldn't know anyone. When she learned that a new friend was going to the same camp, all was well.

Alex will be fine. Jennifer is the one I'm worried about. This will be her first camp, too, the first time she has let Alex be away with someone other than family or an overnighter at a girlfriend's house.

Letting go is the hardest part. I always said that if we as parents do our job right, our children will want to leave us. That doesn't help us, however, in learning how to let them go.

From the Bible

Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he; before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the Lord; and beside me there is no saviour. Isaiah 43: 10, 11

Honor Roll

Welcome and thanks to these recent subscribers to *The Oberlin Herald*:

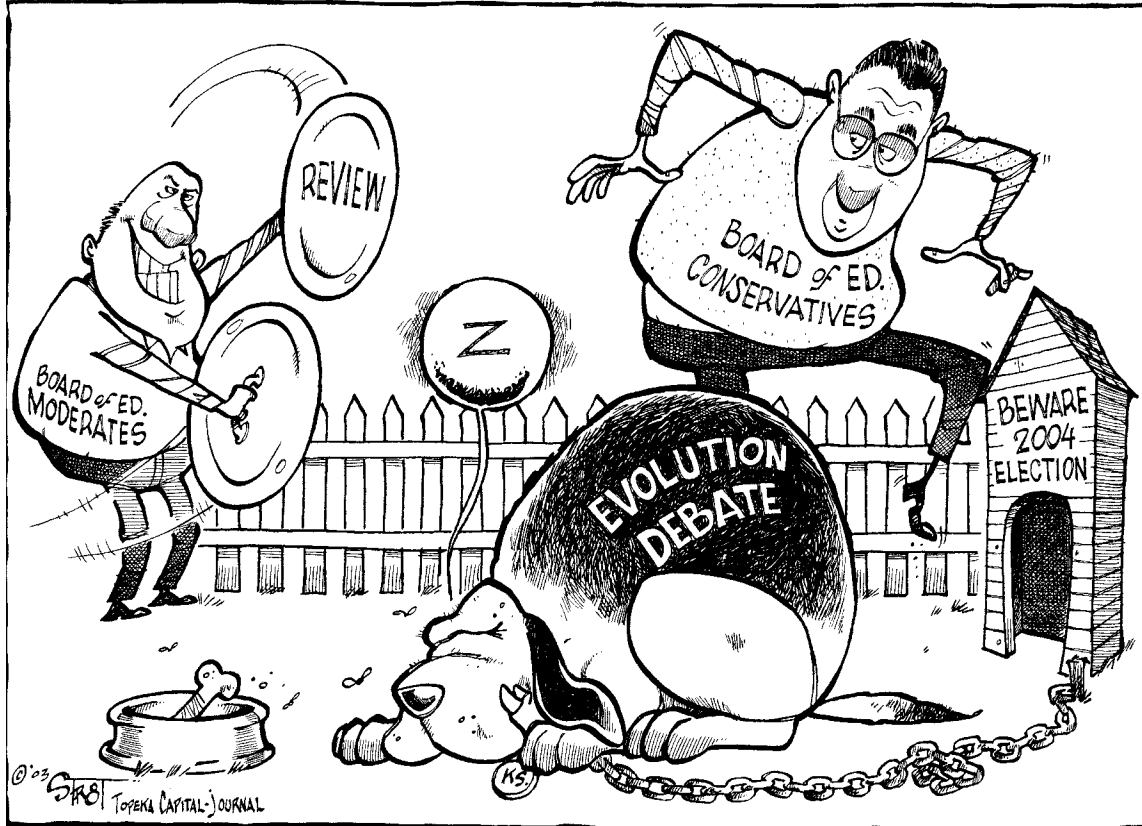
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She says education worth cost

To the Editor: As a guest at Oberlin Rotary this past week, I was privileged to hear Jake Leichter, a 1999 graduate of Decatur Community High School and a 2003 graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy. It was good to learn that his high school classes had prepared him to compete, even excel, in what is acknowledged as one of the top academic programs in the U.S.

Since then I have pondered our future: will we be able to continue to furnish the same quality education not just for a student like Jake, but for all of our students, whether they choose college, vo-tech, the military or the job force? I felt fortunate to have that opportunity, as did my children. Though my grandchildren live elsewhere, I am concerned for the children and grand-

Letters to the Editor

children of others in this community. I regret local voters chose to opt out of the intangible tax several years ago and that the state of Kansas currently is not able to meet its commitments, but it is my hope that voters will support the local option budget increase until the economic situation improves and the state is

able to do so. I do not want to see our academic standards compromised, and I feel that extracurricular activities, such as those offered by our outstanding music department, add to the quality of life for students as well as for our community as a whole.

Jody Betts
Oberlin

Woman asks for 'yes' vote

To the Editor: Please vote yes for our school, our students, our teachers and our community. Support the standards we

have always maintained.

Cheryl Metcalf
Oberlin

Reader feels board needs to wake up

To the Editor: A wise man told me once there is a place where money and principle meet. Has it met for the Oberlin school district?

We all know that Robin Hood robbed from the rich because the poor don't have any money.

Tuesday will be the fourth of five times this board has asked for more money. One more will come up in November, so get your yard sign in now. I take issue with the board and the superintendent that a child cannot be educated without some fiscal responsibility. Don't they realize Kansas has a financial problem? Also the farmers have a problem, and that a great portion of our population is on Social Security.

At this time, two-thirds of our grade school teachers are maxed out at \$40,000 per year. The red sheet

we all got states Atwood is a maximum local option budget, but they combined a superintendent and principal position so at least they are trying.

The capital outlay could have been spent on something beside the football field and athletic lockers, maybe computers.

I think my health insurance, utilities and heating will also go up this year, but I'm not getting a 5 percent raise. They tell me we haven't reduced staff, but we lose 10 percent of our school population each decade. I hear people say we should reduce staff and get rid of the bad teachers. We should have done that 20 years ago. My question is, who is representing those of us that still pay taxes?

- How about block teaching.
- Using librarians and counselors

in the classrooms. Lengthen the school day and shorten the school year.

- Retire some teacher to half-time.
- Putting the \$7 million building project on the back burner.

A comment that the red sheet makes is that the state will not give us any money without the district spending the maximum local option budget. Don't hold your breath. I would bet that they would raise the local option budget amount instead of giving us more money.

We pay the superintendent a lot of money. He is a bright guy, if the board will let him do his job. We'll have a lean and better education system, or are we going to make like the Titanic, because we are headed for an iceberg?

Ronald Temple
Norcatur

Writer says taxpayers have obligation

To the Editor: The taxpayers of the Oberlin School District have an obligation to the children of our school district just like the one our parents had when we were children.

Our parents and the taxpayers of this area met that obligation when we were young, and we must today.

When I first heard of the tax increase for the school, I reacted much as many have ... here my taxes go, up again another couple hundred. Then common sense prevailed, and I looked at what was being proposed.

Due to a cut in state funding, declining enrollment and increased costs directly attributed to the classroom, the schools need about \$170,000 more than current taxes will provide. According to the best school finance sources available, that equates to just at 2 mills, or two

cents for each hundred dollars of appraised valuation. Once I took a look at this, I decided that the real cost to each of us was pretty minimal ... about \$3 per month for the average (\$60,000) home in Oberlin.

What I can't understand now is

why we are putting the issue to a vote. Come on, what is \$3 a month to meet the obligation we have to these, and the next leaders of this world.

Ray Bryan
Oberlin

Tax increase not for upgrades

To the Editor: I just wanted to remind everyone the school district's local option budget election is not for a remodeling project. This is to pay teachers' salaries and fixed bills, such as health insurance.

If you were not able to attend the public meeting last week, there is an excellent informational sheet in the businesses downtown. I encourage everyone to read this and be an informed voter. Health insurance for the school district is over \$100,000,

and heating nearly \$25,000. For a moderate-sized home, the proposed local option budget is about the cost of a couple of pizzas, or a few "cubes" of Pepsi. Surely we can all do that.

Decatur County is shrinking. Let's not lose any more families. We need the businesses we have, our schools and our medical facilities.

Vote yes for the future of Decatur County.

Jeannie Gawith
Oberlin

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170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749-2243

Phone: (785) 475-2206 Fax (785) 475-2800

E-mail: obherald@nwkansas.com

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STAFF

Steve Haynes editor
Kimberly Brandt managing editor
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Yard sale shopper mad about ad

To the Editor: The following ad appeared in *The McCook Gazette* on Thursday, July 17: Oberlin Community Garage Sales - July 18 and 19 - Maps available at the chamber office after 3 p.m. on Thursday, July 17th, all day Friday and Saturday 7:30-10 a.m.

I drove down from McCook this morning, Friday, July 18, to go to all the garage sales. When I arrived, I found that the Chamber of Commerce office does not open until 9 a.m. I drove around town to see where the garage sales were. After not finding any, I went into one of the local businesses and was told most of the garage sales were not until that evening and Saturday. He said some people were upset last year when they drove down early for the sales.

When I finally got a map, I found out there were only two garage sales in Oberlin on Friday morning. I then found out only one of these was

open. That one garage sale had very nice individuals running it. They mentioned that other people had come that stated they had driven into Oberlin from out of town to attend the garage sales. He mentioned they were upset also about there being only one garage sale on Friday morning.

The Chamber needs to make this

situation clear so they do not create poor public relations, considering the cost and time to come down, for the town of Oberlin.

I did enjoy seeing many of the nice looking homes in Oberlin. Thank you for allowing me to express my concern.

Dennis Irwin
McCook

Write

The Oberlin Herald encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of public interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

Mail letters to 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan., 67749, or E-mail to obherald@nwkansas.com.

We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and

expect readers to do likewise. We do not publish form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area.

Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style, clarity, length and legality. We will not publish attacks on private individuals or businesses which do not pertain to a public issue.